



FIRE MOBILIZATION NEWS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

State Emergency Operations Center
Camp Murray, Washington



For immediate release
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Contact: Grey Pressel, Washington State Patrol, 253-912-4936
Mark Clemens, Washington Emergency Management Division,
800-688-8955

State Fire Mobilization authorized for Needle Creek wildfire

Statewide fire service resources were mobilized just before noon Saturday, Sept. 6, in support of firefighting efforts in Okanogan County.

The Needle Creek Fire, which started Aug. 5 in steep terrain east of Washington Pass and the North Cascades Highway (State Route 20), has blazed through approximately 7,000 acres and is now poised 8 miles from the town of Mazama. Although the fire was nearly contained at times over the past month, winds kicked up this week, accelerating the blaze through eight miles of forested mountainside in two days, Sept. 3 and 4. Current containment is estimated at five percent.

As many as 200 homes and structures are threatened by the wildfire if it continues to burn east through the Methow Valley toward Mazama. The Okanogan County Sheriff's Office placed residents in the area on standby to evacuate on short notice, if necessary. The American Red Cross is prepared to provide shelter at the Red Barn near Winthrop if evacuations take place.

The Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan was authorized at 11:55 a.m. Saturday by Chief Ronal W. Serpas, Washington State Patrol (WSP). The plan is developed to provide personnel, equipment and other resources from around the state when wildfires exceed the firefighting capacity of local jurisdictions.

Officials from Washington Interagency Management Team No. 3, which is heading the firefight, are concerned by extremely high fire conditions and slowing down the fire's speedy advance of Sept. 3-4. They note that while Mazama is the first town the fire could affect, the towns of Methow and Winthrop could also be threatened. More than 300 firefighters and 50 pieces of equipment are involved in the firefight.

Although the fire drew closer to Highway 20 Saturday morning, there only current road closure in the area is Harts Pass Road at Lost River. Also at risk are outbuildings and other non-residential structures, natural watershed and wild game.

The State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at Camp Murray is activated. It is being staffed by personnel from the Washington State Patrol's Fire Protection Bureau and the Emergency Management Division of the Washington Military Department.

The WSP Fire Protection Bureau is coordinating the dispatch of firefighters and equipment to support the Okanogan County firefight.

The State Enhanced 911 Office in cooperation with local telephone carriers reminds all citizens in the affected area to:

- Stay off the telephone unless you have a critical need to make a telephone call. Remember also that a fax machine or computer that uses a telephone line may affect your ability to get immediate help in a life-threatening emergency.
- DO NOT call 9-1-1 unless you need an emergency response from police, fire or emergency medical personnel.
- If you experience other types of problems not related to these emergency services, call the appropriate telephone number for those services.
- DO NOT call 9-1-1 unnecessarily – it must be kept open for people who have a true emergency.
- If you pick up your telephone to make a call and do not hear a dial tone, DO NOT HANG UP. Simply wait a few seconds, and you will get dial tone and be able to make your call.

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